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What is a thesis or a capstone project?

The thesis or capstone project addresses a specific issue relevant to enhancing knowledge within the field of human development to ultimately benefit those we impact. At its core, it is either 1) a carefully argued scholarly paper presenting an original argument that is thoughtfully documented from primary and secondary sources, or 2) a project meaningfully informed by relevant scholarly literature, with an accompanying scholarly paper demonstrating the use of research as a basis for the work. The paper or project is developed under the guidance of a sponsor and a second reader, both selected by you. As the final element of your master's degree, the thesis or capstone gives you the opportunity to demonstrate expertise in your chosen field of research and/or practice.

Criteria for selection of topic and format:

- Relevance to the discipline and social welfare;
- Viability of design and completion within anticipated time frame;
- Association with candidate's professional experience;
- Relevance to candidate's graduate interests and trajectory.



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Thesis/Capstone Requirements:

Possible Formats for a Master's Thesis or Capstone in Human Development

Four options are available for the thesis or capstone project. For three (A, B, and C), the final product is a single written paper. For the fourth (D), the final product is a combination of a product and a shorter paper. Your choice of which option to pursue should align with your interests, background, and goals, and should be made in discussion with your sponsor.

A) Critical literature review on a specific question or defined area of interest:

The literature review is a critical examination of research regarding a specific question and examines the strengths and limitations within the research. It provides an in-depth review, synthesis, and critical evaluation of the literature.

B) Theoretical analysis related to a specific area of study:

Similar to the critical literature review, a theoretical analysis provides a review and critical examination of the theories that have been adopted to examine a specific phenomenon or issue. You will provide an in-depth review, synthesis, and critical evaluation of theories and present an argument for adopting a particular theoretical framework for the study of this issue or phenomenon in future work.

C) Empirical project:

Students who have been working on a research project with faculty or as part of a research apprenticeship can choose to write a research report. Students often select a "slice" of on-going research that is related specifically to their area of interest. Occasionally, it is possible to conduct independent research with the approval of your sponsor; **however, to be feasible, this would need to be started a year before expected completion.** This format will be similar to a research study reported in a journal article. It will include a rationale and purpose statement, a critical literature review, a presentation of methodologies and methods of data collection and analysis, findings or results, discussion, and conclusion.

D) Empirically informed product and accompanying literature review:

Students may choose to develop a product (e.g., resource manual, website, film) to address a specific population and issue. The product should be a "stand alone" entity that can be used and distributed once separated from the accompanying paper. For this option, the literature review should focus on providing a rationale and empirical evidence for the purpose and design of the product.

All written products will adhere to APA formatting. For options A-C, 20-30 pages is recommended. For option D, 10-15 pages is recommended for the written component. Page guidance does not include the title page or reference pages. Exceptions to page guidance can be made in consultation with your sponsor.



General Guidelines

To receive a master's degree in Human Development, you must successfully complete 30 credits of course work and write a thesis or complete a capstone project. To complete a master's degree in Applied Behavior Analysis, you must complete required course work and write a thesis or complete a capstone project. Below are some general guidelines pertaining to the formatting and processes of working through your thesis.

Identifying and working with your sponsors:

Once you have decided on a potential thesis topic, choose your thesis sponsor from among any of the Warner School faculty. Because the thesis process is a mentoring experience, it is best to choose someone who has expertise in your area of interest. Most students choose faculty members they have worked with in courses. While it is typical for the sponsor to be your academic advisor, this is not strictly required. Your sponsor will provide general guidance, helping you to refine your topic and develop your argument. You must also choose a second reader. You may select from any Warner School faculty, a qualified professional in an academic or community setting, or a Warner doctoral student. This person will primarily serve in a supporting role, helping you to formulate your project and providing feedback at a less intensive level than your sponsor. Your sponsor can provide a template letter to provide to your second reader with guidance for this role.

In the occasional circumstance when the most appropriate sponsor is a University of Rochester faculty member outside the Warner School, the second reader must be a Warner School faculty member. Such circumstances should be discussed in advance with your advisor.

In most cases, students and their sponsors will need to meet quite regularly throughout the development of your thesis project. At the first meeting, you will establish the frequency and format of these meetings. Your sponsor may require completion of a thesis prospectus and additional steps to support your progress and ensure you receive regular feedback. Please keep in mind that your sponsor must have enough time to read and evaluate drafts before returning them to you with comments, and that you must have time to incorporate those comments. You should be prepared for the possibility that your sponsor and second reader will request substantial changes in the thesis along the way.

Use of Written Material from Course work:

The thesis or capstone is intended to build from the courses and experiences you have completed during your master's program. You are encouraged to use readings and papers from courses as a foundation for this work and may use text previously used in course papers. The thesis may not, however, be solely resubmission of assigned coursework. If you are unsure of how to navigate this aspect of preparing your thesis, please consult with your sponsor.

Formatting:

We require APA formatting of composition and all citations. Your cover page must include the thesis title, your sponsor's name, and the month and date the degree will



be conferred. In addition, you must include the statement: "Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science." At the bottom of the title page, include Margaret Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development, University of Rochester. In addition, you must include an abstract. Please use 1-inch margins, double space, and use at least 12-point font.

Submission of final version:

When your thesis has been approved by both your sponsor and second reader, both will send indication of this approval by email to the appropriate administrator in Warner's Student Services. This will register your thesis as passed and, with successful completion of all required course work, indicate completion of your master's program. If the sponsor is not your advisor, please confirm with your advisor that you have completed your thesis.



Timeline: Completing Your Thesis

Once a faculty member has agreed to be your sponsor, discuss your anticipated graduation date (e.g. Fall or Spring) and agree on a timetable for meetings and submission of drafts. Following is a guideline based on your anticipated graduation date. Specific due dates vary each year but are approximately:

- **May graduation:** End of April
- **March graduation:** Early January
- **October graduation:** Early August

	May graduates	March graduates	October graduates
Decide on your topic, select your thesis sponsor, and schedule a first meeting	January	August	March
Select and reach out to a second reader.	January	August	March
<i>(Optional; in discussion with sponsor)</i> Prepare a thesis prospectus or a 1-2 paragraph abstract, preliminary bibliography, and outline to discuss with your sponsor. You may also share these documents with your second reader.	January	August	March
1 st Draft submitted to your sponsor	February	September	April
2 nd Draft – revise and submit	March	October	May
3 rd /Additional Draft(s) – revise and submit to sponsor and second reader	April	November	August
Additional drafts – to include feedback from second reader and ongoing feedback from sponsor	April	February	September
Title and abstract submitted for inclusion in thesis symposium booklet	Early April	[Early April the following year]	Early April
Final thesis approved by sponsor and second reader; confirmation sent to Student Services	No later than last week in April	Before the start of the Spring semester	Before the start of the Fall semester
All students participate in our Master's Symposium in <u>early May</u> . Students share digital posters of their work with the Warner community and invited friends and family.			
Conferral of degree	May	March	October

NOTES ABOUT TIMELINE:

- If you are planning on working on your thesis during the summer months, many faculty are on a 9-month contract. Consult your thesis sponsor and faculty advisor regarding their availability during the summer months (May 25-Aug 25).



WARNER
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER

Department of Counseling and Human Development
Human Development Master's Thesis Guidelines

- This timeline may not provide sufficient time for completion of all potential projects. Empirical projects, in particular, will require more time.
- Students whose final thesis is not approved before the start of the subsequent semester will be required to register for continuing enrollment.



Thesis Prospectus Format (Suggested)

Name: _____

Date: _____

Tentative Title: _____

Indicate Research Question/Topic/Purpose:

Clearly and concisely indicate what questions you are proposing to address or issue you are proposing to critically explore.

Indicate Thesis Format:

Which format have you selected for your thesis (see list and description of possible formats). Why is this format best suited to address your question or issue?

Statement of the Problem:

Provide a statement about your topic and the rationale for its importance. In this statement of the problem include the relevance of the topic to a specific aspect of the life span or a specific area of study within human development or ABA.

Annotated Statements:

Provide a bibliography of 6-8 references with a brief overview of each article or chapter's purpose and its relevance to your thesis focus.



WARNER
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER

Department of Counseling and Human Development
Human Development Master's Thesis Workshop

[Sample Title Page]

Cultural Perspectives on Child Development: Implications for Educators

By

Folashade Olayinka-Bello

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the

Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Supervised by Professor Joyce Duckles

Margaret Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development

University of Rochester

August 2023